



School Experiments Asked, Since Present System Fails Really to Educate Pupils

Teachers' Union President Says His Organization Is
Studying Results With View to Making Rec-
ommendations to Improve the Process

This is the eighth article in a series on the effects of congestion in the schools upon the education of the city's children. The ninth article will appear to-morrow.

By M. Jay Racusin

The school teachers of the city can, of course, point to the vital weaknesses of the educational system and suggest with authority some remedies. Being the cogs in the machine that come into actual contact with the child, they assuredly can tell why a large proportion of the city's children are not being properly educated. Of more than ordinary weight, therefore, is a consideration of the subject by Dr. Henry R. Linville, president of the Teachers' Union, of New York City, representing the views of those directly responsible for the mental development of 900,000 pupils.

Under the topic "Why Are the New York City Children Not Being Educated?" Dr. Linville presents as a basic fact the lack of school buildings and the consequent crowding and part time schedules. The congestion in classrooms, he says, suggests stockyard conditions rather than groups of young human beings.

Terrific Strain on Teachers

With these conditions, he is surprised that there has been no recognition of the fact that the schools are not educating. Speaking for the teachers, he says bluntly: "They are not doing the job." He points to the terrific burdens the situation places upon the instructor, who is striving to teach the children what is thought they ought to know, and the evident impossibility, despite all efforts, of adhering to the syllabus requirements.

Teachers and schools, he points out, are rated on the basis of percentage of pupils promoted, so that in the system of striving for the standard of what a pupil is expected to know is likely to be neglected and tends to become lower and lower. Many teachers, he says, are forced to slight the formal syllabus requirements to avoid breaking down under the strain.

Aside from considering the admitted shortage of school buildings, which he urges be remedied at the earliest possible moment, Dr. Linville indicates that his organization is making a thorough study of the actual results of the public educational system, a report upon which, with suggestions for remedies, it hopes to have ready before the end of the school year. Dr. Linville's discussion follows:

"The question 'Why are the New York City children not being educated?' places in the mind the discouraging idea that the city of New York will spend next year nearly \$100,000,000 on public education and will not get what the money is paid out for. This thought of failure on the part of our system of education enters a great many minds that would not for a moment grant that public education is attempting to work out an unsolvable problem. With many the success of public education depends on the amount of money available for the purpose. Possibly \$25,000,000 or \$50,000,000 more would be enough to turn failure into success.

Part Blame on Lack of Funds

"Whatever doubt one may have of the effectiveness of spending more money on public education, there are certain difficult conditions that are traceable to the lack of money. For example, out of approximately 1,000,000 children in the schools more than 200,000 are on part-time. More than 200,000 are on double-session programs. The double session plan itself is almost necessarily a part-time arrangement. Part time schedules give a maximum of four hours in the school day, while the full day is one of five hours of work. Often part time and double sessions mean no more than three and one-half hours of real school work a day. The 600,000 children remaining are forced into classes where the crowds suggest stockyard conditions rather than teachable groups of young human beings.

"In spite of the fact that the schools have long been in politics to the extent that each succeeding administration promises a seat for every child, ridiculing the handling of the situation by its predecessors, the number of part-time and double-session classes, as well as the crowding, have steadily increased during the entire history of the greater city. Large sums of money have been set aside spasmodically for new buildings, although the actual construction of buildings invariably lags.

37 Per Cent of Budget for Schools

"Twenty years ago the amount spent on the schools was about 25 per cent of the annual budget. Now it is 37 per cent of the budget. Although the city is making some progress in manifesting a willingness to spend more money on the schools, the difficult conditions are becoming more and more serious. There is enough basis for wondering whether the continuance of the agitation for spending still more money on the schools will alone give us the results we are seeking. Father Knickerbocker may love his children dearly. Under ordinary circumstances he may submit indulgently to heavy draughts upon his purse, but in time he will sit up and inquire with exasperated sternness what the money is being spent for. In the particular case in hand, he will ask, or let us say, he should ask, what kind of education is being paid for with his \$95,000,000.

"There have been periods in which portions of the public have offered strong objection to the kind of education given in the schools. At these times the main criticism seems to have been of the 'fads and frills' of the schools. Occasionally there has been opposition to the development of the high schools, now giving instruction to 100,000 children. Many have proclaimed the supreme importance of the 'essentials,' demanding that these be given the main consideration. But there has been no serious question of the underlying principles of the system of education, no inquiry of the system itself as to what its purpose and ideals really are. Moreover, there has been no recognition of the fact that the schools are not educating. They are not doing the job. Clear enough indication of the truth of this statement is to be found in the general dislike of children for the school or their indifference toward its requirements.

"There still are a great many persons who believe in the efficiency of the discipline of things and forces we do not like. But the money cost of truancy, the money cost of retardation in the progress of the pupils from grade to grade and the relation obviously existing between the holding back of thousands of pupils and the crowding in the classes all tend to persuade the mind that consideration must be given to elements that hinder the movement of children through the school years and to the efficiency of the teaching.

"As an indication that the Department of Education itself is deeply interested in the working out of the problems involved, it has issued recently a very interesting pamphlet, entitled 'Pupils' Progress Through the Grades.' The outstanding facts of the statistical data presented were: First, the

much more than make the machinery of the system operate more satisfactorily. It cannot solve the great problem, because it does not take account of the factors involved.

"The report refers to the cumulative effect of comparatively low rates of non-promotion in producing retardation and congestion. The cumulative effect is recognized, but the non-promotions show low rates. The story of the low rates of non-promotion is an important one. The educational system does not tell the story. Then others must.

Rate Schools on Promotions

"Examinations of the children supply the data for promotions. The purpose of the examination is to find out what the pupil knows. What a pupil is expected to know bears an indeterminate relation to what he has been told or has learned from a book. If children do not react satisfactorily to the current system of teaching they will remember less than they should. A strict application of the rules will cause the failure of a pupil and will compel him to take the subject over the succeeding term. If the standards are high the pupil mortality, to use a technical school phrase, is great. If the percentage of failures is high in a given school or in a given department the record is noted by officials. Teachers and schools are rated on the basis of percentages of pupils passed.

"When the discipline of a school by a principal or superintendent is strict and is directed toward securing a high percentage of promotions the rate of non-promotion will, of course, be low. Thus the standard of what a pupil knows is likely to be neglected in the economic necessity a teacher feels of making his own grade satisfactorily enough to secure the official rating leading to an increase of salary. Under very strict official discipline, especially in the high schools, the administration exacts another requirement. This is it bases the rating of the teacher on the percentage of pupils passed who sustain a high standing in subsequent terms of similar work. The purpose of this is to check any inclination on the part of a teacher to overestimate the percentage of pupils deserving to pass.

"However, this plan has little effect, since each teacher following in the course of study is under the same necessity of showing high percentage results.

Standard Becomes Lower

"The natural result of the system of striving for percentages is that the

standard of what the pupil is expected to know tends to become lower and lower. Even the state or Regents' examination standards must be adjusted to meet the situation. Conscientious teachers will not neglect their duty, however. In spite of a shifting standard of school work, they will earnestly strive to teach the children what it is thought they ought to know, or to teach as near the syllabus requirements as possible. In the crowded conditions of the schools a teacher who strives to teach what the pupil ought to know is subjected to tremendous physical strain. But a great many teachers often grow into a habit of slighting the formal syllabus requirements from sheer necessity to avoid breaking down under the strain.

"After all, the civic question involved in all this is whether any proposal or consideration hitherto laid before the public by those concerned with the management of education relates clearly enough to the problem of accomplishing the education of the children. Few would attempt to maintain that education consists in collected information, or even in arranging it in the mind. And none could defend the method of formal examination as the chief instrument for testing capacity in any substantial enterprise of adult life. Is it not true that when critics say the children are not being educated, they have in mind an obvious fact? The graduates of the schools know how to do very little. We have always known this, but we have believed the current system of education trains the mind. Almost imperceptibly we have given up this belief. Some are now granting that the existing practice in education may even blunt or defect creative capacities in the mind.

"There have been few organized attempts to meet the criticisms, except by such proposals as mental age grading and more skillful teaching. Many educators discuss the situation, suggest new lines of improvement, and end by despairing of solving the problem. Here and there experimental schools have sprung up. Some of these schools are experimenting with the courses of study to determine what teachers can do along the lines of new subject matter or with new methods of presenting the subject matter. Other experimental schools are endeavoring to learn the nature of the process by which children learn to do things, and to develop their own creative powers. Judging from the experience of these new types of experimental

schools they may have hit upon the secret by which many have had to get their education in spite of schools and teachers, and of parents as well. We hear virtually nothing from these experimental schools of mental-age grading and examinations.

"The discovery, or the rediscovery, of the method by which one may obtain the education that works, that develops power and that makes children happy while being educated is certainly worth striving for and worth spending money for. But the City of New York is not spending one cent for this purpose. Thus far the educational authorities have given no sign of interest in the matter.

"If New York becomes interested in educating the children effectively, it may be willing to spend even half the annual budget for the purpose. And, perhaps, the citizens would not begrudge it.

"The enterprise of studying the results of our public education, and of recommending specific measures for fundamental improvement, has been entered upon by the Teachers' Union of New York. Committees of teachers are now making these studies in considerable detail. Before the end of the school year they hope to have ready plans for proposing to the Board of Education the establishment of experimental classes and schools in the public school system.

"Of course, it is generally recognized there is at present a great shortage of school room, which must be first remedied before any other suggestions can be fully carried out."

Russia's 320 Million Gold

France Denied Bondholders

PARIS, Nov. 27 (By The Associated Press).—The efforts of French holders of Russian bonds to get possession of the 320,000,000 gold francs deposited in the Bank of France under the guardianship of the United States and the allied powers, and belonging to the old Czarist regime, have finally failed. The French government has informed the bondholders that the money cannot be touched for any purpose unless under agreement by the allied and associated powers, in whose hands it was placed under the provisions of the Treaty of Versailles. The French now have no intention of disturbing the money until some Russian government receives general recognition.

The gold was originally exacted from Russia by Germany under the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk.

The biggest thing a man works for— the last thing he lets go of

THE one thing above all others that the average man works hardest to get is a home of his own.

No sacrifice is too great to get a "little place" where he can establish his family in comfort—a place he is glad to come back to at the end of the day.

Seldom does the average man find himself in a position to lay down the cash for his home. He pays what he can and arranges for financial help that permits him to pay off the balance in amounts and on terms that he is able to meet.

The man who is buying his home hangs on to it to the last ditch. He makes his payments on his home; no sacrifice is too great, no effort too hard for him to avoid losing the one thing he prizes above all else.

There can be little wonder in the face of this that statistics—cold figures devoid of sentiment—show that when the average man buys a home he goes through with it. He pays for it. He would not want a home in the first place if he were not worthwhile, industrious, dependable. He is a good risk—the best risk for you or me to help. We can depend upon his word; and doubly so when he gives that word to pay for the home he builds.

I am not in the position of trying to make men rich. I leave it to others to promise to tell you the easiest way to amass wealth by some short cut.

My interests and the interests of the Institution I serve are devoted to helping the average man own his home. We do this not merely by planning and building his home, but extend to him that all-needed help to finance it on a plan that brings home ownership years nearer than he ever thought was possible.

Our business touches the interest of the average man very closely; and we naturally are careful of the type and kind of man we help. The measure of our ability to help men own their own homes is not to be estimated in terms of willingness. Our services are freely at the call of men and women who need the advice and experience of an institution such as ours; our financial help is limited only by the resources we can command.

During the past four months we have received requests from 1,600 persons for aid in financing and building their homes. We are building the homes of some of them right now; others are to be built for occupancy in the Spring.

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To these persons of responsibility, we have extended the necessary help to finance them. But there is a limit to the resources of even a wisely organized and soundly functioning organization such as ours.

We have reached a point where the available capital of this institution is not sufficient to meet the overwhelming requests for help. We have reached the point in our wide activities where we must expand if we would live up to our fullest possibilities.

The Empire Homebuilding Association makes a profit in its business of building. Each individual building operation shows a profit, else we could not continue. The profits to be made are governed only by the number of homes we build under the Empire Homebuilding Plan. The logical thing for us to do, in the face of the success that has attended our co-operative work, is to expand; to increase our available resources in capital to enable us to accept the contracts that are to be made the minute we are able to assume them.

We invite your investigation of The Empire Homebuilding Association; as to its record, its personnel, its plan, and the possibilities before it. We believe you will find in that record and in the plans we have made for the future just such an opportunity for profitable investment as will appeal to you on the basis of protection and unusually liberal returns.

I am going to tell you more in these columns from day to day, just why The Empire Homebuilding Association and its business should interest you. In the meantime, I invite you to call at our offices, or write for fuller details of the Profit-Sharing Plan we are presenting for your consideration.

Alton R. Wells
President

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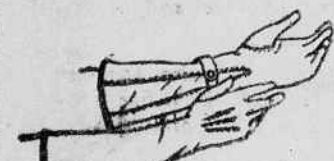
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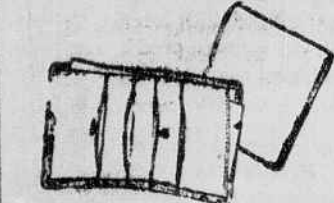
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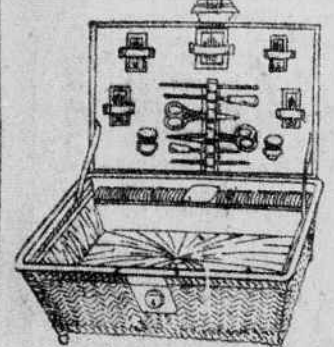
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